



Pharmacists Step in to Help Manage High Blood Pressure

Peninsula Community Health Services (PCHS) envisions a way for patients unable to get to the doctor to get much-needed blood pressure checks and management through their local pharmacist.

High blood pressure is known as the “silent killer” because half of the people who have it are unaware. If high blood pressure is left unmanaged, it can lead to heart disease and stroke, two of the leading causes of disability and death in Washington State.

Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure has traditionally been the responsibility of doctors.

Unfortunately, many people suffering from high blood pressure don’t get care for it because they either don’t know they have it, or they don’t have the time or resources to visit a doctor.

To address this issue, the Olympic Health Action Network (OHAN), a group of 13 clinical, public health, and social service providers across Clallam, Jefferson, and Kitsap Counties committed to help people, particularly those with limited incomes, receive blood pressure checks.

One OHAN partner, Peninsula Community Health Services (PCHS), a

federally-qualified health clinic serving Kitsap County, came up with an innovative strategy to have their pharmacists work with patients to ensure that they know if they have high blood pressure and can better manage it if they do.

A New Role for Pharmacists in Managing High Blood Pressure

In 2014, concerned by the high rate of high blood pressure among their patients (more than 1 in 4), Peninsula Community Health Services (PCHS) began exploring a team-centered approach to reducing high blood pressure among patients. In this approach, the primary care provider, pharmacists, medical assistants, and call center staff work together to help patients proactively manage their blood pressure. PCHS’s Quality Management Team established clear protocols for identifying patients with troubling blood pressure readings and specified pathways for managing care for these patients.



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Pharmacist consults with patient to help manage high blood pressure.

Source: OHAN

In 2015, with grant funding from Kitsap Public Health District (KPHD), the convening organization of OHAN, PCHS was able to build on the team-based approach by expanding the role of pharmacists in actively managing high blood pressure for patients.

Pharmacists Help Serve Low-Income Patients in Need

In this amplified role, pharmacists either proactively identify patients at-risk of high blood pressure or they receive a referral from a primary care provider for a patient with an existing high blood pressure diagnosis.

After identifying a patient in need, pharmacists then schedule a “hypertension consult visit.” During this visit, the pharmacist measures the patient's blood pressure, interviews the patient regarding medication adherence and side effects, counsels the patient on pertinent lifestyle modifications, and coordinates changes to medications that might work more effectively for the patient.

In this expanded system, pharmacists play a critical role in ensuring that all patients with hypertension get help managing their blood pressure, including those who may not have previously had access to care. This is particularly critical for the patient population served by PCHS, as poverty, combined with other life stressors can often make it difficult to maintain good health without extra supports in place.

Program Results

Incredibly, 76% of PCHS’s patients now have controlled blood pressure, despite the relatively higher rates of hypertension that occur in their population compared to other Washington State residents.

The expanded role of pharmacists in coordinating care and medication for these patients has contributed to PCHS’s success rate. Preventing and reducing high blood pressure rates maintains healthy hearts, and healthy hearts save lives.

Quick Facts About 1422

State investments in community

\$1.62 million annually

Number of years awarded

4

Number of funded communities

5

Total number of counties reached

22

Total potential reach

2,108,010 adult community members



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